

ENFIELD TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Testimony of
Mary Lombardo
Before the

Appropriations Committee

HB 5117 AAC Portions of the State Budget Appropriating Aid to Municipalities
SB 1121 An Act Establishing A Task Force to Study the Distribution of State Funds to Municipalities

April 5, 2011

Good Afternoon. My name is Mary Lombardo. I have lived in Enfield for over 30 years and raised my family here. My grandchildren are now attending Enfield Public Schools. I am a veteran teacher in Enfield and President of the Enfield Teachers' Association.

I am here today to address both House Bill 5117 AAC Portions of the State Budget Appropriation Aid to Municipalities and Senate Bill 1121 An Act establishing A Task Force to Study the Distribution of State Funds to Municipalities.

I am very concerned about the future of education in Enfield especially from a fiscal point of view. For the past 4 years, the Town Council and the BOE have given the schools budgets with no increase. The Enfield Teachers' Association in an arbitrated agreement was given a 0% increase for 2011-12 and no step increases for the next 3 years. Programs have been cut in Enfield and teachers and other staff members have lost jobs. Two elementary schools were closed this year and class sizes are growing with some grades above 25 in a class. Library aides have been cut so that libraries are not open all the time. In the middle school, there is no Certified Librarian. "Extras" such as the instrumental program and sports have been cut. So as you can see, Enfield is operating at a "bare bones" budget level. There is nothing left to cut.

Any bills that address municipal aid, like HB 5117 and SB 1121 must take into consideration fair municipal funding for schools in the Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR). For example, I understand that there is a proposal in House Bill 6385 that would lower the Minimum Budget Requirement by each enrollee fewer than the previous year. I am asking you to take the MBR into consideration, and its potential impact on our schools, when making any changes.

It would seem possible that for example, an elementary school might lose several students per grade level and not actually see any personnel saving. So, for example, if an elementary class size went from 24 to 21, you would still need the same teacher, but the district would receive \$12,000 less for the students remaining in that class.

As I have stated, the budget in Enfield has had no increase in the past 4 years. Teachers continue to lose jobs while class sizes are increasing. I can't even imagine what a projected loss of another \$400,000 could do to our school system. Just because there are fewer students, does not mean the staffing needs are less. But that is where the cuts will come.

My grandchildren are first grade twins this year, in classes of 13 and 14 students. How lucky they are. Next year they will be in a class of approximately 24, due to reorganization and budget issues. They will not be getting the same amount of attention next year, for sure. If more money is cut, what will the effects be on them and all the other Enfield students?

I urge you to carefully consider the impact of any MBR changes before you act rashly. Of course, there may be some savings which may occur as a result of substantial decreases in student enrollment, but it would take a very careful examination to actually assess the savings which would be realized, but most likely, it is far less than \$3000 in all cases.

Thank you.